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Man In The Middle

## McNamara's Dilemma Laid to Secrecy Policy

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## News Analysis

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara is a man in the middle. From one side he is criticized because of the United States' alleged "overkill" nuclear capacity. From the other he is criticized for even a minute cut in the military establishment.

Of the two criticisms, it is the latter that worries him most. Indeed, he is even thinking of taking to television to explain his case to the Nation.

Meanwhile, McNamara is making good use of President Johnson's social get-togethers at the White House for Senators and, recently, Representatives. Before the drinks are passed, the assembled Congressmen listen to what have been described as "briefings" by Secretary of State Dean Rusk and McNamara.

## Explains Policy

McNamara is using the occasions to explain why he can safely cut the Defense budget, why he can trim the output of fissionable material for nuclear weapons, why he is combing the long list of military bases for more that can be curtailed or closed completely.

He has found a lot of resistance, some of it public and some of it private. In part, members of Congress naturally worry about the effect on jobs in their dis-

tricts or states. More important in the long run, however, is the degree of resistance on grounds that McNamara is not just cutting military fat but is nicking the bone of military power.

The Defense boss has tried to explain all the many possible war contingencies and how the United States is prepared to meet each one. He argues, in effect, that from a standpoint of weapons the United States is so adequately supplied that it can afford to slow the pace of production and thereby save huge sums of money.

## 'Secrets' Leaked

Unhappily, many of the supporting facts for McNamara's argument are labeled "top secret" though he has exposed them to members of Congress. Furthermore, some of these facts have been deliberately leaked to the Soviets just to make sure they respect American military preparations and weaponry.

Yet the public here at home is largely in the dark. McNamara talks out loud of "tens of thousands" of nuclear weapons in the American arsenal. This is so vague, however, that it helps less to persuade that the Pentagon has "full kill" capabilities than to further the idea that it has a huge "overkill" capability, that is, far more than is necessary to obliterate any possible enemy.

This feeds the "overkill" argument advanced by Columbia University Prof. Seymour Melman. Though McNamara professes to be un-

worried by the attack from Melman's end of the spectrum, the Air Force is showing considerable concern, since that service is Melman's chief target.

## Power Disputes Thesis

Gen. Thomas S. Power, commander of the Air Force's Strategic Air Command, has been highly critical of the Melman thesis to visitors at his Omaha headquarters. And the February issue of Air Force Magazine, a publication which reflects that service's thinking, devotes a full page to Power's remarks and another 12 pages to "The

Myth of Overkill" by Amrom H. Katz, a well respected RAND Corp. physicist and Government consultant.

The burden of the Katz thesis is that Melman is talking through his hat because he simply doesn't know the facts or understand the strategy. Katz makes an effective rebuttal to Melman (combined with a crack about "the road to Meltown" and other forms of scorn).

## Pleads Against Secrecy

Katz combines this with a forceful plea against secrecy as the chief block to

disarmament; but he is talking about Soviet secrecy alone. Katz, like McNamara, knows the top secrets, Melman doesn't and neither does the American public. And the facts given members of Congress are given in secrecy though the Soviets know many of them.

McNamara once broke through the secrecy curtain in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis by holding a televised news conference. The Central Intelligence Agency was miffed but the facts McNamara revealed lessened the suspicions about hidden missiles in Cuba.

The same sort of approach could be equally effective in convincing Americans that their Defense establishment is so adequate that a slowing down in new weapons procurement is sound and that even with such cuts there is no "overkill" capacity.